

# ESL 220: Academic Writing & Grammar

Tuesdays, Thursdays & Fridays / 10:20 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. / Section 002  
English Language Center / Michigan State University / Summer 2011

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Class Wiki: <http://esl220summer2011.wikispaces.com>

## Required Textbooks

- ♦ Barbara Harris Leonard. *Discoveries in Academic Writing*. © 2002.
- ♦ Elaine P. Maimon, Janice H. Peritz, and Kathleen Blake Yancey. *The Brief McGraw-Hill Handbook* (with 2009 MLA update) © 2009.

## Strongly Recommended Books

- ♦ English-only Dictionary—a good college-level one, available at any bookstore and online (Amazon, Barnes & Noble, etc.)
- ♦ An English-only Thesaurus—a reference book like a dictionary but that provides synonyms & antonyms instead of definitions.

## Necessary Materials

- ♦ pens & pencils; notebook and/or note paper; fasteners (paper clips, stapler, etc.); and several two-pocket folders.

## Course Description

The main goal of this course is to help you build the solid foundation of writing skills you'll need to succeed in your academic courses at MSU. Since you will be expected to write papers and take essay exams throughout your academic career, it is extremely important that you are able to express your ideas clearly. You will need to have a well-developed vocabulary, adequate knowledge of English grammar, and strong critical thinking skills to achieve proficiency as a writer at the university level. We will spend the majority of our time focusing on these skills. We will stress all of the important areas of effective essay writing: pre-writing (planning, brainstorming), drafting, giving and receiving feedback, revising, editing, and publishing. We will also learn other important writing skills such as summarizing, responding, analyzing, describing, and showing not telling, as well as how to appropriately address a variety of audiences (readers) and use tone, style, and diction to give your writing character and make it interesting, informative, and communicative. This class will also include a significant amount of grammar instruction. We will discuss problematic areas of grammar, as they relate to academic writing, as well as proper use of punctuation. In short, the goal of this class is to help you learn the skills you need to write successfully at the level and in the way of the American university.

## My Teaching Style

In this class, you will learn to write *by writing*. No one has ever become a better writer by listening to lectures, taking notes, studying, observing, or imitating. We learn to write in one way—by doing it. Try to think of me as more of a coach or guide than an “instructor”; it is my job to create an environment in which you are always practicing your writing—this is the only way to improve. Expect a lot of diversity activities and assignments both in and out of class. Occasionally, I have to give “mini-lectures” to introduce concepts or teach specific lessons; however, I am as bored as you are by purely lecture-based courses. Therefore, you can expect a lot of variety in assignments and class work, small and large group work, individual work, meetings with me to discuss your writing, multi-media presentations, peer review, quizzes and tests, and so on, all designed to help you practice skills, learn concepts, and think more critically in wide-ranging contexts.

## Class Rules

I expect you to act like adults when you are in my classroom. That means no unapproved cell phone use, no sleeping, no unnecessary and distracting talking with classmates, and no behaving in a rude, disrespectful, or disruptive behavior of any kind. If you act like a child, I will treat you like one. If you are asleep, texting, or otherwise distracted during class, I will mark you absent and likely ask you to grow up, leave the classroom, or both.

## ASSIGNMENTS & GRADE BREAKDOWN

### **TEACHER GRADE (80% OF TOTAL GRADE)**

#### *Paper Portfolios (50%)*

The semester will be divided into two units; each is worth 25% of your total grade. When I introduce each unit, I will provide you with specific instructions, assignments, and due dates. We will begin with writing primarily from and about personal experiences, observations, and opinion, learning how to express our ideas clearly without the aid of research and/or outside sources. Toward the middle and end of the semester, we will focus more on writing in response to readings, specific skills like summarizing, and incorporating research (outside sources) into formal, academic papers. In most cases, you will write at least three drafts of each major and minor paper: the first draft is for peer review, the second draft will be handed in to me and discussed in conferences, and the third draft is the final draft.

#### *Presentations & Projects (10%)*

You will be assigned at least two to three presentations during the semester; at least one of these will be a group presentation (possibly two) and one may be an individual presentation. Specific instructions will be given for each presentation.

#### *Grammar & Punctuation Homework, Quizzes & In-Class Assignments (10%)*

During the first half of the semester, we will spend a lot of time learning about problematic areas of grammar in a variety of areas including sentence purposes and structures, common grammatical errors, and things like punctuation and mechanics. I will assign a variety of work, including things like questions from textbooks and worksheets. I will also give you quizzes to test your understanding of the rules and concepts we go over in class. Some may be handwritten; others must be typed. Detailed instructions will be given in class.

#### *"Other" Homework, Quizzes & In-Class Assignments (5%)*

During the semester, I will assign reading, questions from textbooks, worksheets, timed writing practice essays, and other work focusing on things like vocabulary, diction, style, and other topics relevant to writing (but not grammar and punctuation). I may also give you quizzes to test your understanding of these concepts. Some may be handwritten; others must be typed. Detailed instructions will be given for each assignment.

#### *Editing, Grammar & Style Project (5%)*

At the end of the semester, there will be a major project due in which you will identify, present, explain, correct, and reflect on the major areas of grammar, punctuation and mechanics problems you have when you write and how you have and will continue to work on finding ways and strategies to help you overcome these problem areas. Specific instructions will be given in class.

### **DEPARTMENT WRITING TEST GRADE (20% OF TOTAL GRADE)**

#### *Departmental Timed Writing Tests #1 & 2*

You will have 2 timed writing tests this semester—one shortly after midterm and another about a week before the last day of class. These tests are administered by the English Language Center to all sections of ESL 220/221. Timed writing tests are graded by other ESL 220/221 instructors (not by me) and are used to create consistency and objectivity among all ESL 220/221 students and sections. Grades for the timed writing tests are averaged to make up the final 20% of your grade in the class. We will spend time in and out of class practicing and learning about strategies for writing successful timed writing essays.

**Departmental tests cannot be taken early, made up, or rescheduled for any reason. If you choose not to attend a timed writing test, you will NOT be allowed to make up or retake the test and you will get a ZERO. This is the official policy of the ELC.**

### **Grade Information & Scale**

ESL 220 is a credit-bearing course, which means that the grade you receive in this class will affect your overall GPA. Earning a 2.0 or above in ESL 220 meets MSU's general English proficiency in writing for undergraduates. Undergraduate programs/majors sometimes require a higher grade; check with your department/program to find out if you need more than a 2.0 in this class. Many graduate programs require a 3.0 or 3.5 minimum grade; if you are a graduate student, please check with your program/department to see if a higher grade is required. Be aware that it is very possible to get lower than a 2.0 in this course—and it happens most to those who do not come to class regularly, those who do not use the wiki, and those who fail to follow instructions.

**4.0=90-100%   3.5=85-89%   3.0=80-84%   2.5=75-79%   2.0=70-74%   1.5=65-69%   1.0=60-64%   0.5=55-59%   0.0=0-59%**

## CLASS WIKI

A wiki is an interactive website, where both you and I can add and edit information, upload and download documents, have online discussions, post (upload) paper and presentation files, conduct peer reviews, make information available, among other tools and uses. The class wiki is an essential part of this class. On the wiki, I provide information about what we do in each class period, assignments and instructions, due dates, handouts, helpful links and documents, announcements, and other important information. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed by checking the wiki's class log and announcements. I do not and will not respond to emails about missed classes if you have not FIRST checked the wiki. If you check the wiki and still have a question, then you may email me to ask it. The wiki is there so that you have a constant source of up-to-date information about what is going on in class and a place to find digital copies of documents and important links, etc. You want to check the wiki at least 4-5 times a week, on the days we have class and over the weekend. It is pretty much *impossible* to pass this course if you don't use the wiki, and use it often. If you do not use the wiki, do not expect to do well in ESL 220. You can find on the wiki almost anything you may need in reference to our class and you are required to use it at times to submit papers and assignments. In order to access the wiki fully and use it properly, you must create a personal account; I will give you instructions on how to do this in class.

## CLASS POLICIES

### **POLICY: expectations & responsibilities**

- YOU are responsible for being prepared for class: this means that you need to bring your textbooks to class EVERY DAY and that your work is completed BEFORE class on the day it is due.
- All assignments, drafts, portfolios, projects, etc. are due at the BEGINNING of the class period. Tests, quizzes, and in-class work cannot be made up unless you are absent for a valid, documented, excusable reason (see "Attendance Policy" to learn what this is) that you have informed me about BEFORE you miss a deadline or class period.
- If you are late on a day when we have a quiz or test or class activity, you will not get extra time to complete assigned work.
- If you are going to be absent on a day when something is due, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to arrange to have a friend, roommate, classmate, or someone else hand it in for you.
- Email is an UNACCEPTABLE way to submit a paper (unless I have given you permission directly).
- If asked to print any documents or assignments and/or upload, download, or print anything (wiki), you will do so when assigned.
- For every day a draft of a paper is late, you will lose 0.5 (on the 4.0 scale) for each day it is late, Saturdays and Sundays included.
- For every day a final draft or other major assignment is late, you will lose 1.0 for each day, Saturdays and Sundays included.
- If you skip a meeting (conference) with me, you will lose 1.0 on your final paper grade and be counted absent for two classes.
- If you skip a day when we do peer review, you will lose 1.0 from your final paper grade and be counted absent for two classes.
- All drafts of papers and other indicated assignments must be submitted digitally (uploaded to wiki) as well as printed and handed in on paper. (It is not my job to print your papers and I do not give time to print drafts on peer review days or due dates.)
- If you will be absent and/or miss a deadline, ALWAYS speak to me or email me in advance to avoid absences and losing points.

Basically, as long as you communicate with me and tell me about problems BEFORE something is due or BEFORE you will miss a class, are late, or miss a deadline, I'm easy to get along with and happy to work with you so that you do not lose points. However, if you do not talk to me as soon as a problem occurs—in other words, if you wait until AFTER you miss class or a deadline—I cannot and will not excuse absences/lates or accept late work. The only exceptions to these rules are major illness, serious injury, or family emergencies. In these situations, you must notify me IMMEDIATELY by phone or email. Do NOT tell me what is going on after the fact. In short, this is college and you are all adults: I expect you to act accordingly and responsibly.

### **POLICY: attendance**

You signed up for your education at a specific time and are responsible for attending class regularly. I expect you to attend class each day and to be on time. However, I realize that there will probably be a couple of days during the semester when you don't feel well or may need to miss class for another reason. Because of this, you get 2 "free" absences—days that you can miss class without an excuse and without losing any points. Please note that "being sick" is not an automatically excused absence; absences will only be excused if you have a note from a doctor, Olin Health Center, the hospital, or some other credible source. After 2 absences, your final grade (the teacher grade portion) will be deducted by 0.25 (on a 4.0 scale) for each additional absence. You can be counted absent for behaviors like sleeping, texting, distracting others, and/or being disruptive in class; please keep this in mind. If you are late more than 10 minutes, you are absent; 3 lates equals 1 absence. If there are serious circumstances that will affect your attendance, talk to me right away. I do not excuse lates/absences if you do not talk to me BEFORE you are late or absent. Basically, do your best to be on time, use your free absences wisely, and talk to me immediately if you encounter a problem.

**POLICY: handing in your work**

- Save All Your Work—do NOT save over top of your drafts of papers. *Save each draft as a new file.*
- Store Back-Up Copies—make sure you have back-up copies of all your work; do NOT delete anything.
- Keep All Work—keep everything that relates to this class—seriously.
- Upload Final Copies—all final drafts of all papers and all presentations/projects must be uploaded to the wiki.
- Everything you submit should be neat, organized, and professional in appearance. If it isn't, I won't accept it.

**Formatting Requirements for Handwritten Work**

- ◆ Always include your name, date, and assignment description at the top of the page & write so I can read it.
- ◆ Do not hand in papers torn from a spiral notebook—edges should be clean and neat.

**Formatting Requirements for Formal Assignments (Papers, Portfolios, Etc.)**

- ◆ FONT & SPACING: Use 11- or 12-point *Times New Roman* or *Arial* font and double space text (except for info below)
- ◆ TOP LEFT CORNER: In the *top left corner*, put your complete name, the class information (ESL220-2/Keys Stahl the assignment name or description (such as Paragraph, D1; Paragraph, D2, Paragraph, Final Draft, etc.) *Single space* this text.
- ◆ ONE-INCH MARGINS on the top, bottom, left, and right of the page (you will have to reset these in Word)
- ◆ LEFT ALIGNMENT: set to "left" (never use "full" alignment)
- ◆ PAGE NUMBERS go in the *top, right corner* of each page.
- ◆ CENTER TITLES but do NOT enlarge, bold, underline, or italicize them. Titles should appear one space above the first line.
- ◆ INDENT EACH NEW PARAGRAPH five spaces (or one "TAB").

**ALL of the required assignments in this class must be completed and submitted, including all papers, tests, and presentations.**  
**You will not be eligible to pass ESL 220 if you do not complete and hand in all required assignments, including all portfolio materials, paper drafts, presentations, projects, etc.**

**POLICY: plagiarism & academic honesty/integrity**

Plagiarism is intentionally or unintentionally presenting someone else's writing, words, and/or ideas as if they are your own. We will discuss plagiarism and how to avoid it extensively in class. You will want to avoid it because **plagiarism can result in a failing grade on a paper or in the course, or expulsion from the university and I do NOT tolerate it in my classroom.** Plagiarism is a serious issue in American colleges and universities. If you plagiarize intentionally, I will report you to the university and you will be subject to disciplinary action that will stain your academic record. Remember that I read your work all semester and it is very easy for me to notice when you don't sound like "you" anymore; in other words, plagiarism is easy for me to spot. Beyond this, plagiarism destroys the trust between a student and instructor and cheats you and your classmates out of true knowledge and learning. It is quite easy for me to see when a student plagiarizes accidentally and when he/she does it on purpose. I expect that ALL of the work you produce for this class will be your own, unique material for that particular assignment or paper. Using work from previous or other classes and/or getting extra help from people outside our class are also forms of Academic Dishonesty that I will not tolerate. Additionally, academic honesty encompasses cheating on tests and/or quizzes, making up information, using another student's work, and other issues. I, of course, do not tolerate any activity that violates MSU's Academic Honest Policy. To see a complete version of MSU's Academic Honesty Policy, see the University Ombudsman's webpage (<http://www.msu.edu/~ombud>). I will always talk to YOU first if there is a problem with your work to give you a chance to explain and correct your mistake(s).

*NOTE: Information included in this syllabus is subject to change. Any necessary changes will be communicated to you both orally and in writing.*